

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES**  
**PROBATION DEPARTMENT DESCRIPTION**  
**ADULT SERVICES**  
INTERVIEWS JULY 31, AUGUST 1–3, 2000

**Interview Process**

A request was made to the Los Angeles Probation Department to schedule on-site interviews on July 31 and August 1–3, 2000, with seven stakeholder groups. With the exception of the chief probation officer and senior staff, the groups were divided into juvenile and adult services. Because no interviews were scheduled with the county administrator's office or with juvenile and adult public and private community agencies, this report reflects the views of only four stakeholder groups:

1. Judges and court administrators
2. Chief probation officer and senior staff
3. Line supervisors and probation officers
4. Prosecutors and defense attorneys

A total of 57 people were interviewed. This number included the following:

- Two judges from juvenile services
- Three court administrators
- Eleven senior probation managers
- Twenty-five first-line juvenile and adult probation supervisors and line staff
- Twelve supervisors and line staff representing juvenile halls and camps
- Four prosecutors and defense attorneys

The same questions were addressed by several stakeholder groups. Separate reports addressing juvenile and adult services have been prepared for Los Angeles County. Although many of the answers in both reports are the same or similar, the questions were addressed separately by both juvenile and adult services stakeholders. In some instances,

contradictory responses were given. These areas of contradiction are reported under the questions to which they pertain.

Prior to the on-site interviews, several actions occurred. Eighteen categories related to juvenile and adult services were developed. Each category included several questions specific to that topic. These questions were discussed, modified, and clarified at a meeting with representatives from the six counties selected to be part of this process. To accommodate the time frames of this project, participating counties were asked to address the questions in writing and to provide as much information as possible prior to the actual interviews. *This report combines all responses and does not specifically identify the part of the justice system reporting.* The 18 categories are as follows:

- I. Demographic Information
- II. Organizational Structure
- III. Department Mission and Objectives
- IV. Policies and Procedures
- V. Monitoring and Evaluation Process
- VI. Management Information Systems
- VII. Funding Sources
- VIII. Probation Services
- IX. Specialized Court Services
- X. Probation and Private Service Provider Partnerships
- XI. Staff Development and Training
- XII. Communication Systems
- XIII. Program or Service Gaps
- XIV. Partnership with Judiciary
- XV. Partnership with Prosecutors and Defense Attorneys
- XVI. Partnership with Other Collaborative County Departments
- XVII. Juvenile Probation Partnership with Education System
- XVIII. Strengths of Probation Department

## **LOS ANGELES COUNTY ADULT SERVICES DESCRIPTION**

A total of 30 stakeholders addressed the questions related to adult services. The participant breakdown follows:

- Three court administrators
- Eleven senior managers
- Fourteen supervisors and probation officers
- Two prosecutors and defense attorneys

### **I. Demographic Information**

#### **A. Description of the county**

Los Angeles County, one of California's original 27 counties, is one of the nation's largest, covering 4,083 square miles. This area is more than 800 square miles larger than the combined expanse of the states of Delaware and Rhode Island. Los Angeles County includes the islands of San Clemente and Santa Catalina. It is bordered on the east by Orange and San Bernardino counties, on the north by Kern County, on the west by Ventura County, and on the south by the Pacific Ocean.

Its 1999 estimated population of 9.7 million distinguishes it as the county with the largest population in the nation. The racial mix in Los Angeles County includes 3,194,753 Caucasians, 4,359,095 Hispanics, 1,208,966 Asians/Pacific Islanders, 937,216 African Americans, and 27,810 Native Americans. Approximately 29 percent of California's population live in Los Angeles County.

There are 88 cities within the county. More than 65 percent of the county is unincorporated. For the 1 million people living in those areas, the local board of supervisors is their "city council."

The county budget for fiscal year 1999–2000 is \$15 billion. Thirty-seven percent of the revenue comes from the state, 27 percent from the federal government, 14 percent from property taxes, and 22 percent from other sources.

Los Angeles County is the largest employer in the five-county region, with 89,358 budgeted positions. More than 27,000 of these jobs are in law and justice. There are 614 courtrooms, 428 authorized judges, and 144 authorized commissioners.

#### **B. Size of probation department**

The probation department was established in 1903. The department has nearly 4,550 employees and serves all the municipal and superior courts in the county. Its employees staff over 50 work locations, including juvenile detention centers, residential treatment facilities, and field service offices.

#### **C. Offender population, including types of offenses**

- In 1999, there were more than 30,000 investigations for drug offenses, 14,000 for property offenses, and 10,000 for offenses against persons
- In 1999, there were about 20,000 offenders on probation for drug offenses, approximately 6,000 for property offenses, and 4,500 for offenses against persons
- At the end of 1999, there were approximately 41,000 offenders under automated minimum services, about 12,500 high-risk offenders, and approximately 14,000 offenders under narcotic testing

## **II. Organizational Structure**

#### **A. History of structure**

- No information provided

#### **B. Theory behind organizational structure**

- No information provided

**C. Reporting lines of authority**

- Five layers of management:
  - Chief
  - Deputy chief
  - Bureau chief
  - Manager
  - Supervisor
- Lines of authority are consistent in juvenile and adult divisions
- Five layers of management are working effectively

**D. Discuss organizational structure strengths**

- Appears to be the appropriate levels of management staff

**E. Suggested organizational changes**

- Organizational structure is working well

**III. Department Mission and Objectives**

**A. Written department mission statement**

- There is a department mission statement that was developed approximately five years ago
- The mission statement is currently being reexamined

**B. Written adult services mission statements**

- Adult probation services has a separate mission statement

**C. Written annual objectives for adult services**

- Some specialized programs have written objectives
- There are written objectives for grant programs
- There are general objectives for department management

- There are no annual objectives for all department employees

**D. Discuss staff involvement in the mission statement process**

- A committee representing line staff was involved
- Focus groups were used
- A survey was used
- Line staff expressed interest in being involved

**E. Discuss how objectives are implemented within the department**

- Objectives are developed collaboratively to complement management's objectives
- Long-term objectives are developed by the executive staff
- There is no direct communication with line staff

**IV. Policies and Procedures**

**A. Does the department have a policies and procedures manual?**

**How often is it revised?**

- A department manual exists
- Each bureau has a manual
- Manual has not been updated for several years
- Manual is available on the intranet but is incomplete

**B. How are policies and procedures implemented?**

- There is no structured format
- Notices
- Directives
- Verbally with managers
- Executive committee to prospective bureau chiefs
- Supervisory review
- Training courses related to policies and procedures

- Training bulletins

**C. Describe the process used to prepare policies**

- Policies are generally initiated by executive management
- Committees of subject-matter experts are used
- Supervisors are involved in committees
- No line staff on the committees
- Union plays a major role

**D. Describe staff input in policy development**

- Ad hoc committees
- Standard committees for juvenile and adult services
- A policy is shared when it comes out

**E. Describe the process used to monitor policies and procedures**

- Appropriate controls are put in place
- Random review of policies and procedures
- Review by statistics
- Every director and supervisor uses a different approach
- There is no consistent approach

**V. Monitoring and Evaluation Process**

**A. Describe the evaluation procedures for programs and services**

- Grant programs have evaluation components as part of the award system
- All contracted programs have an evaluation component
- This area needs to be refined
- Not all programs are evaluated
- RAND corporation provides outside evaluations for some specific programs
- There is no in-house evaluation and research unit
- Department is heading in the right direction

- Pretrial has an evaluation in place

**B. Are evaluations designed on performance-based measures?**

- Some specialized programs are
- Regular caseloads do not have performance-based measures

**C. Describe how monitoring and evaluation information is reported to the CPO**

- Receives reports from each bureau that address status of programs
- Daily contact with management and staff

**D. Describe how this information is integrated into programs and services**

- No information presented

**E. Describe how information from evaluations is integrated into management decisions**

- Changes are mandated
- Management is open to change based on evaluation information

**VI. Management Information Systems**

**A. Describe the current information system**

- Countywide mainframe implemented in 1992
- Pretrial uses the mainframe and personal computers
- Probation staff can program from the mainframe

**B. Assess the efficiency of the information system**

- From 65 to 90% efficient
- Pretrial 95% efficient
- Data entry is inconsistent



**C. Describe how information needs are determined**

- Department's business units identify areas that need automation
- The Information Systems Office conducts assessment and preliminary requirements analysis and makes recommendations to executive management
- The Information Systems Office makes recommendations on new technology solutions
- Executive management reviews recommendations and funding requirements and decides on suggested implementations
- Users committee that includes line staff is included
- Supervisors and directors assess needs

**D. Does a users committee exist and what is the composition?**

- Several users committees focus on different functional areas, such as juvenile and adult services and administration
- Committee members include executive, operations, and technical staff

**E. Describe how the MIS interacts with other parts of the system**

- The information system officer meets regularly with executive and operations staff
- Information systems in the court and prosecutor's office are shared with probation

**F. Discuss additional information needs**

- Integrated information systems
- Proactive information from other agencies
- Electronic transfer of documentation
- Police reports
- District attorney information
- Sharing of information with law enforcement agencies
- Steering committee with other departments
- Computerized financial information

- Dual-supervision information
- Elimination of redundant data entry

**G. What are the computer equipment needs?**

- Personal computers
- Laptop computers
- Remote access to mainframe systems

**VII. Funding Sources**

**A. What is the total budget (juvenile and adult breakdown)?**

- The total budget for FY 2000-2001 is \$388,165 million

Juvenile Services:

|                           |              |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| ▪ Juvenile investigations | \$10,923,000 |
| ▪ Juvenile supervision    | \$51,114,000 |
| ▪ Juvenile placements     | \$7,786,000  |
| ▪ Detention services      | \$97,326,000 |
| ▪ Residential treatment   | \$78,303,000 |
| ▪ Care of court wards     | \$8,336,000  |

Adult Services:

|                      |              |
|----------------------|--------------|
| Pretrial services    | \$17,988,000 |
| Adult investigations | \$30,397,000 |
| Adult supervision    | \$37,280,000 |
| Support program      | \$32,449,000 |
| Administration       | \$16,263,000 |

**B. What are your various funding sources?**

- TANF allocation
- TANF camps and ranches

- Title IV-E
- Realignment dollars
- Other state grants/programs
- Other federal grants/programs
- County general fund
- Miscellaneous revenue
- Intrafund transfers

**C. Where are your greatest funding item deficits?**

- Deferred maintenance of over \$300 million
- Staffing in all bureaus
- Additional support for peace officers
- Vehicles
- Ammunition
- Cell phones
- Nextell phones
- Building safety issues
- Additional facilities for staff to alleviate overcrowded office space
- Computer equipment
- Copy machines
- Specialized technical support

**D. Level of CPO control over budget**

- Has control over department budget
- Participates in county board committees

**E. Large budget category comparisons for the past five years**

- FY 1997: \$294,153,000
- FY 1998: \$304,640,000
- FY 1999: \$341,113,000
- FY 2000: \$370,294,000

- FY 2001: \$388,165,000
- The budget increase from 1997 to 2001 is \$94,120,000, or over 24%
- The county general fund contribution to the 2001 budget is 58.3%
- The county general fund contribution for the past five years has ranged from 57 to 62%

## **VIII. Probation Services**

### **A. Discuss the automated and validated needs/risk tools being used**

- Needs/risk assessment for probation
- Needs/risk assessment for pretrial services

### **B. Describe any specialized assessment services you provide**

- RAND is working on validation of several assessment instruments

### **C. What are the current probation supervision workload standards?**

- There are currently no workload standards
- There is no system of equal distribution of workloads among probation officers
- Specialized caseloads have maximum cases per officer
- Yardstick standards are in place for all caseloads
- Workload standards are not based on time-study information
- Union negotiates workload standards

### **D. Describe how these workload standards are determined**

- Workload standards are the result of negotiations with collective bargaining units

### **E. Describe the case plan process (supervision plan)**

- The presentence investigation stated conditions of probation
- There is no specific detailed plan

- Supervision staff creates a plan when an offender is placed on probation
- Staff must return to court to add conditions of probation

**F. Describe the continuum of services offered to probationers from least to most restrictive sanctions**

- Minimum assessment supervised by court officers
- Automated banked caseload
- High-risk offender
- Domestic violence
- Child threat
- Narcotics testing
- High restitution
- Gang unit
- Drug court (DUI)
- Drug court postconviction
- Electronic monitoring
- County parole
- Work furlough

**G. Are there eligibility criteria for entering and exiting each program and service? Please describe.**

- Determined by individual probation office

**H. What sanctions along the continuum are *not* available?**

- Mental health offender caseloads
- Elder abuse caseloads
- Sex offender caseloads
- Interstate compact unit

**I. Describe the highest priority sanctions needs**

- Protection of the community sanctions

**J. Describe the role the judiciary plays in the intermediate sanctions system**

- Approximately 75% of judges accept the recommendations of the probation officer
- Judges play an active role in the determination of probation conditions

**K. What role does the judiciary play in determining the types of supervision sanctions needed?**

- Judiciary levies supervision sanctions
- Judiciary takes an active role
- Makes determinations on three-strikes decisions

**L. Are there any mandated sanctions?**

- None reported

**IX. Specialized Court Services**

**A. List the specialized programs in your county**

- DUI drug courts at preconviction
- Drug courts at postconviction
- Domestic violence courts
- Mental health calendar
- Early disposition court

**B. Describe the relationship between these programs and probation**

- Specialized courts use a partnership approach and have a good working relationship with other agencies
- Judges have a more favorable partnership with probation and work together in special courts and on court calendars

## **X. Probation and Private Service Provider Partnerships**

### **A. Describe the services private vendors provide to the probation department**

- Electronic monitoring
- Drug treatment
- Mental health services
- Housing
- Community services
- Drug testing

### **B. How does probation staff view these services or programs?**

- Eighty-two private contracts
- General observation is very positive
- Excellent collaborative relationships
- Caution about vendors having their own agendas

## **XI. Staff Development and Training**

### **A. Describe the specific training subjects offered to staff**

- Each new probation officer receives 240 hours of training by the state
- Each probation officer must have 40 hours of training annually
- Each institution worker must take 24 hours of annual training
- Each new supervisor and manager receives 80 hours of required training
- Each employee receives an in-house orientation program
- There is a training unit
- Training is offered with internal staff as instructors
- Training is offered by contracted instructors

### **B. List the training courses that are mandatory**

- Field probation officer core: 182 hours of generic training

- Juvenile corrections officer core: 158 hours of basic entry training
- Basic supervisor core: 80 hours of instruction after promotion
- Manager/administrator core: 80 hours of instruction after promotion

**C. Describe how staff training needs are determined**

- Supervisors determine officer needs
- Supervisors provide training on site
- A staff training unit addresses training needs
- Supervisors discuss training needs jointly with officers
- There is a yearly survey of training needs

**D. Describe the process used to get staff input for training needs**

- Training officer conducts an annual staff development needs inquiry
- An excellent range of training courses is made available to staff

**E. Describe the types of cross-training taking place**

- Some occurs within the department
- Staff recognizes a need for cross-training and welcomes opportunities
- Core classes are offered in a cross-training setting
- Each bureau offers some training opportunities
- Some state and federal training

**F. Describe the management training being offered**

- After promotion, an 80-hour course is available for supervisors or managers
- Leadership training is provided for anyone who wishes to attend
- It would be helpful to offer management training prior to promotions
- Staff may be on the job several months before training is offered

**XII. Communication Systems**

**A. Describe the department's staff meeting schedule**



- Executive team meets twice a month
- Staff in each bureau meet monthly
- Supervisors' meetings with staff vary
- Line staff does not meet with bureau chiefs
- Infrequent meetings with line staff and top management

**B. Describe the process used to disseminate day-to-day information to line staff**

- E-mail
- Memoranda
- Directives
- Chain-of-command process
- Department intranet

**XIII. Program or Service Gaps**

**A. Discuss the resources, services, or programs you need to provide a more effective probation service**

- Mental health resources
- Substance abuse treatment services
- Joint family caseload between juvenile and adult probation officers
- Employment resources
- Vocational training resources
- More services to misdemeanor offenders

**B. Are any programs mandated?**

- None discussed

**XIII. Partnership with Judiciary**

**A. What services does probation provide for the judiciary?**

- Presentence investigations
- Court officer services
- Drug court case management support
- Early dispositions
- Supervision of offenders

**B. Describe the relationship between the judiciary and the probation department**

- Excellent at the top levels of the department
- Relationship is open and cordial
- Probation sees its role as a service to the courts
- No conflict with judges
- Reports to court could be more timely, but timeliness is improving
- Probation staff feel free to present positions to judges
- Lack of services is an issue
- Probation reports are not consistent
- Probation lacks good judgment in some cases
- Limited resources have a negative impact on the judiciary's confidence in probation
- Relationship is improving but could be much better
- Probation got disproportionate budget cuts that affect its delivery of services
- Probation report recommendations do not follow the facts
- Judges have little confidence in probation
- Judges sometimes demean probation officers

**C. Describe the process used by probation and the judiciary to ensure that the judiciary has the broadest possible sentencing alternatives**

- In-house resource lists are given to the judiciary
- Meet with judges

**D. What changes or enhancements are needed to improve this partnership?**

- Regular meetings with judiciary
- Keep pleasing the court
- Increased staff resources
- More programs that emphasize offender responsibility
- More court officer units
- Presiding judges get more involved with probation
- Probation waits too long
- Better-quality probation reports
- Submit probation reports on time
- Probation officers need to provide more offender information
- Probation officers need to be more familiar with the law
- More consistent quality in probation reports
- Defendants sometimes have better information than probation officers

#### **XIV. Partnership with Prosecutors and Defense Attorneys**

##### **A. What are the points of interaction among probation, prosecutors, and public defenders?**

- Prosecutor uses pretrial information to make cases
- Prosecutor reviews files
- Prosecutor interviews defendant
- Probation calls defense attorney to locate defendant
- Defense attorney and probation discuss cases in specialized courts and calendars
- Limited contact with defense attorney

##### **B. Describe the relationship among prosecutors, defense attorneys, and the probation department**

- Prosecutor is not up to date on training issues
- Prosecutors change every three months

- Prosecutor needs to be more responsive to probation requests
- Quality of probation officer staff is an issue
- Probation has a poor image
- Sentencing reports are too lenient
- Sentencing reports are not lenient enough
- Defense attorney views probation as an “enemy”
- Probation almost always recommends a stiff term instead of reviewing mitigating circumstances

**C. Discuss the exchange of information among probation, prosecutors, and defense attorneys**

- Copy of petition
- Police reports
- Probation has access to information submitted to the court
- Probation can access anything in the prosecutor file
- Probation requests information from defense attorney
- Usually no exchange of information with defense attorney

**D. What changes or enhancements are needed to improve the partnership?**

- Attorneys need to be trained on the role of probation
- Probation officers need to be of a higher quality
- Cross-training in court operations
- Longer assignments for prosecutor and defense attorney
- Improve the ability to exchange information electronically, which would reduce paper flow, avoid duplication of data entry, and speed up information exchange
- Set meaningful joint goals
- Monitor the system
- Better-quality presentence investigations
- All parties need a better understanding of roles

## **XV. Partnership with Other Collaborative County Departments**

### **A. What are the points of interaction with these departments?**

- No stakeholders were scheduled for interviews

### **B. Describe the relationship between probation and these departments**

- Probation has collaborative relationships with all departments
- Probation participates in regular multiagency meetings to address common issues

### **C. Discuss the exchange of information between probation and these departments**

- No stakeholders were scheduled for interviews

### **D. What changes or enhancements are needed to improve this collaborative relationship?**

- Expectations need clarification
- Issues need to be addressed in a more timely manner
- Need to develop a network relationship
- Develop a better understanding of each other's roles

## **XVI. Strengths of Probation Department**

### **A. List and discuss the elements of the probation department services that you believe are outstanding or exceptional**

- Juvenile halls and camps are innovative and well managed
- Excellent progress on automation
- Staff is very resilient
- Ability to absorb new staff and make changes
- Adding resources to adult services
- Determined and dedicated staff

- School-based programs are excellent
- Productive contacts with other branches of law enforcement
- Community outreach programs are good
- Repeat offender prevention program has been effective
- Dependency and delinquency system interaction
- Outstanding drug testing program
- Department is trying to make improvements
- Doing a great job of managing large caseloads
- Excellent diversity of staff
- Probation prepares excellent pre-plea reports
- Probation does an excellent job of researching criminal history
- Probation is accessible by phone to the prosecutors office